



Model City's "Model" Residents Help With Revitalization

Eastward Ho!, FL

Model City's prospects are looking up as residents, businesses, and government agencies team up and take measure of the area's brownfields—a first step towards revitalization. Model City (also known as Liberty City) is a distressed Miami-Dade County neighborhood that has suffered from a social and economic downturn for a number of years, including experiencing severe civil unrest in the early 1980s. So when the Eastward Ho! Brownfields Partnership (of which Model City is a part) received the Showcase Community designation in 1998, area residents and businesses eagerly partnered with federal, state, and local agencies in an effort to turn their neighborhood around.

Showcase Communities are selected by the Brownfields National Partnership to demonstrate that through cooperation, federal, state, local, and private efforts can be concentrated around brownfields to restore these sites, stimulate economic development, and revitalize communities. Showcase Communities serve as models for broad-based cooperative efforts to support locally based initiatives. Showcases receive up to \$400,000 from EPA for both environmental assessments and to support the loan of a federal employee to the Showcase for up to three years. Showcase Communities receive additional financial and technical support from the Partnership's more than 20 federal partners, depending on the community need and program eligibility.

One of the Showcase Community benefits that Model City has taken advantage of is the opportunity to partner with and obtain support from different public agencies. Since the Showcase Community award, more than 60 community meetings have been held to help select an assessment and inventory target area and recruit volunteers. In June 2000, a team of approximately 20 area residents and business people—working with representatives of EPA, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection, the Miami-Dade County Department of Environmental Resources Management, the Miami-Dade County Community Action Agency, Florida Memorial College, the City of Opa-Locka Brownfields Task Force, students from Florida International University, the Miami/Miami Dade County Weed and Seed Program, the Miami Police Force, and staff from other local and regional agencies—conducted initial environmental assessments and created an inventory of 110 acres consisting of 263 parcels of land within Model City. The assessment project has already provided insight into the lack of employment opportunities in the area and provided a starting point for area businesses and residents to begin to plan and make choices about future economic

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JUST THE FACTS:

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- A team of approximately 20 area residents and business people—working with federal, state, and local representatives—conducted assessments and created a site inventory.

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development needs for their community. In addition, many of the assessed sites were determined to have little to no contamination, which eased fears regarding health hazards and cleanup requirements throughout the community.

The Showcase Community partnership is now working with Miami-Dade County and EPA Regional staff to characterize the inventoried sites based on their degree of contamination, their proximity to major infrastructure, and their reuse potential. Work to analyze the assessment data and determine which sites will need more detailed environmental assessments was finished in 2000. This analysis was used in part to determine where to conduct additional assessments to support the city's Homeownership Zone Initiative, which will provide home ownership and economic development opportunities for residents of a low-income minority area within Miami. With the aid of the Showcase Community, the city has performed environmental assessments to support this Initiative. The project includes the eventual development of 400 to 500 new homes with green space, a community center, a new postal facility, a health care facility, and revitalization of the area's commercial corridor. The city is in the process of acquiring the necessary land, and the Initiative's planning stage is nearly complete. Implementation is scheduled in summer 2002.

The collaboration among residents, local officials, and federal agencies is helping to rejuvenate other areas in Southeast Florida as well. In the Miami-Dade region of the Showcase Community, more than 100 acres along the Miami River have been identified as having potential for mixed-use and residential reuses. Showcase Community staff have also worked with local government officials and other stakeholders to develop processes for systematic brownfields site inventories. Also in the Miami-Dade region, a Brownfields Oversight Committee comprising brownfields stakeholders makes community involvement an integral part of brownfields restoration. This Committee meets once a month, and all meetings are open to the public, advertised through public notices, and locally televised. The Eastward Ho! Showcase Community also assisted the City of Fort Lauderdale in applying for and receiving its own Brownfields Assessment Demonstration Pilot, and helped the City of Fort Myers to develop a brownfields public outreach program.

Showcase Community partnerships in Southeast Florida have provided a framework for regional decision-making covering all potential brownfields sites, and are continually working to identify and secure funding for the assessment and cleanup of brownfields. The National Institute of Environmental Health Services (NIEHS) awarded Clark University \$200,000 to conduct job training activities in the Showcase Community target area, as part of NIEHS' Minority Worker Training Program. The Governor's Office of Trade, Tourism, and Economic Development provided a \$200,000 grant to the Eastward Ho! Brownfields Partnership, to spur site restoration efforts. And the Florida Department of Community Affairs contributed \$75,000 toward the same purposes. In total, brownfields revitalization projects within Southeast Florida have leveraged more than \$180 million from the public and private sectors.

There have been other noteworthy brownfields accomplishments outside of Showcase Community efforts in Southeast Florida. For example, in the City of Opa-Locka, a former brownfields property was converted into a new gymnasium—a project funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Hispanic-Serving Institutions Assisting Communities Program. A Brownfields Toolbox/Information Guide, which is a comprehensive database containing names, addresses and telephone numbers of individuals and organizations involved in brownfields restoration, has also been developed.

CONTACTS:

For more information on EPA's Showcase Communities, contact Tony Raia of OSWER's Office of Brownfields Cleanup and Redevelopment at (202) 566-2758

Or visit EPA's Brownfields Web site at:

<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>